INFORMATION NOTE*

UNITED NATIONS IRAQ-KUWAIT OBSERVATION MISSION (UNIKOM)

On 3 April 1991, following extensive consultations, the Security Council adopted resolution 687 (1991) setting specific terms for a formal cease-fire between Iraq and Kuwait and the Member States cooperating with Kuwait. In paragraph 5 of the resolution, the Security Council established a demilitarized zone along the boundary between Iraq and Kuwait and requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Council, within three days, a plan for the immediate deployment of a United Nations observer unit.

Following consultations with the Governments of Kuwait and Iraq, the Secretary-General submitted his plan for a "United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission" (UNIKOM) on 6 April 1991. On 9 April, the Security Council approved the plan and decided to set up UNIKOM for the initial period of six months. The first group of UN observers left for the area on the same day.

Purpose of the Mission. The purpose of UNIKOM is to monitor the Khor Abdullah waterway between the two countries and a demilitarized zone extending 10kilometres (6 miles) into Iraq and 5 kilometres (3 miles) into Kuwait, based on borders established between Kuwait and Iraq under a 1963 agreement; to deter violations of the boundary through its presence in and surveillance of the demilitarized zone; and to observe any hostile or potentially hostile action mounted from the territory of one State to the other.

The demilitarized zone is about 200 kilometres (125 miles) long, the Khor Abdullah about 40kilometres (25 miles). For the most part, the zone is barren and almost uninhabited, except for the oilfields and two towns, Umm Qasr and Safwan.

Chain of Command. In accordance with established principles for UN peace-keeping operations, UNIKOM will function under the command of the United Nations, vested in the Secretary-General, under the authority of the Security Council. Command in the field will be exercised by a Chief Military Observer appointed by the Secretary-General with the consent of the Security Council. The Chief Military Observer will be responsible to the Secretary-General, who in turn will report regularly to the Security Council on the operations of UNIKOM and the situation in the area. Major-General Günther G. Greindl (Austria) has been appointed as Chief Military Observer.

Composition. UNIKOM will comprise armed and unarmed military personnel. It will be composed of a group of 300 military observers and an infantry contingent of approximately 680 soldiers and officers. The infantry - five companies drawn from existing UN peace-keeping operations in the region - will temporarily be assigned to UNIKOM to provide essential security for the Mission during the setting-up phase. A field engineer unit will also be attached to UNIKOM to clear mines and unexploded ordnance in the zone. In addition, the Mission will have an air unit with fixed-wing aircraft and light helicopters, a logistic unit responsible primarily for medical care, supply and transport, and a headquarters unit. The maximum initial strength of UNIKOM will be approximately 1,440 all ranks. Military personnel and logistic support will be provided by the following countries: Argentina, Austria, Bangladesh, Canada, Chile, China, Denmark, Fiji, Finland, France, Ghana, Greece, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Kenya, Malaysia, Nepal, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Poland, Romania, Senegal, Singapore, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay and Venezuela. UNIKOM will be headquartered in Umm Qasr (Iraq) and will have two liaison offices in Baghdad and Kuwait City.

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Concept of Operation. UNIKOM will seek to ensure that no military personnel and equipment are within the demilitarized zone and that no military fortifications and installations are maintained in it. To this end, the Mission will: monitor the withdrawal of any armed forces now in the zone which is to be demilitarized; operate observation posts on the main roads to monitor traffic into and out of the demilitarized zone; operate observation posts at selected locations in the demilitarized zone; conduct patrols throughout the demilitarized zone by land and by air; monitor the Khor Abdullah from observation posts set up on its shores and from the air; and carry out investigations.

To enable UNIKOM to effectively carry out its mandate, the Governments of Iraq and Kuwait have been requested to extend to the Mission full freedom of movement, on land and through the air, across the border and throughout the demilitarized zone; to control movement into and out of the demilitarized zone by requiring all traffic to be routed past United Nations observation posts; to notify UNIKOM in advance of sea and air traffic in the demilitarized zone and the Khor Abdullah; and to establish limitations on the right of their citizens to bear arms in the demilitarized zone.

As an observation mission, UNIKOM is not authorized to take physical action to prevent the entry of military personnel or equipment into the demilitarized zone. UNIKOM and its personnel can use force only in self-defence. The Mission will not interfere in the normal civilian life of the area. The Governments of Iraq and Kuwait will carry out all aspects of civilian administration in their respective parts of the demilitarized zone, including the maintenance of law and order.

Financial Aspects. The estimated cost for UNIKOM is approximately $83 million for the first six months and $40 million for the following six-month period. The costs of the Mission will be met from the assessed contributions of the UN Member States to a UNIKOM Special Account. In addition, the Secretary-General has called for voluntary contributions for setting up and maintaining the Mission.

Prepared by Communications and Project Management Division, Department of Public Information

* Conforms with Security Council document S/22488*, as reissued on 16 April 1991